

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONROV 01236 211746Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 1236

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP

REF: (A) MONROVIA 1190, (B) STATE 044008,
(C) MONROVIA 1208, (D) STATE 044159

1. I CONVEYED THE SUBSTANCE OF REFTEL B TO PRESIDENT
TOLBERT FEBRUARY 21. TO SAY THAT HE IS PLEASED PUTS IT
MILDLY. HE OBVIOUSLY HAS BEEN THINKING ABOUT WHAT HE
REFERRED TO AS "THIS HISTORIC VISIT" AT SOME LENGTH SINCE
HAVING HEARD OF IT FROM NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO
(REFTEL C). HE OF COURSE EXTENDS PRESIDENT CARTER A MOST
CORDIAL WELCOME; HOWEVER, HE ASKS THAT URGENT
RECONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO A BRIEF VISIT TO
MONROVIA ITSELF.

2. HIS ARGUMENTS CAN BE SUMMARIZED ALONG THE FOLLOWING
LINES. FIRST, AS ANTICIPATED IN REFTEL A, HE RECALLED
THAT THREE DECADES AGO A PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA'S "BEST
FRIEND" HAD ALREADY VISITED ROBERTSFIELD. SECOND, HE
REFERRED AGAIN TO THE HISTORIC NATURE OF PRESIDENT
CARTER'S TRIP TO AFRICA AND HOW MUCH MORE IT WOULD
MEAN TO ALL LIBERIANS IF HE VISITED EVEN BRIEFLY THEIR
CAPITAL CITY. HE SAID THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR
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HIM TO CREATE THE APPROPRIATE PSYCHOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE
FOR TALKS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AT ROBERTSFIELD.

3. THUS, HE ASKED THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO EXTEND-
ING PRESIDENT CARTER'S TIME HERE SO AS TO PERMIT THE TWO
PRESIDENTS TO PROCEED DIRECTLY FROM ROBERTSFIELD FOR TALKS
AND LUNCH AT THE EXECUTIVE MANSION. HE SAID THAT

FUNCTIONALLY THE GUEST LIST FOR SUCH A LUNCH COULD BE HANDLED IN ANY WAY WE PREFER.

4. I TOLD THE PRESIDENT I WOULD CONVEY HIS VIEWS TO THE DEPARTMENT BUT REQUESTED AND OBTAINED FROM HIM ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT HE WOULD WELCOME AN AIRPORT VISIT.

5. COMMENT: AS THE PRESIDENT DESCRIBED HIS THINKING ON THE VISIT, SINCE LEARNING OF THE POSSIBILITY, HE AT FIRST ENVISIONED AN OVERNIGHT STOP INCLUDING BENTOL AND MONROVIA. HAPPILY, BY THE TIME WE CONCLUDED OUR MEETING HE WAS RESIGNED TO A STOP OF A FEW HOURS. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE DOES NOT CONSIDER A VISIT TO BENTOL WOULD BE APPROPRIATE. THUS, I RECOMMEND THAT WE CONSIDER AS OPTIONS THE AIRPORT STOP OR A QUICK TRIP INTO MONROVIA. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED AND GIVEN THAT WITH POLICE ESCORT THE ROUND TRIP ROBERTSFIELD-MONROVIA-ROBERTSFIELD WOULD NOT CONSUME MORE THAN 75 MINUTES, I RECOMMEND PRESIDENT CARTER ACCEPT THE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION FOR LUNCH AT THE EXECUTIVE MANSION. GIVEN REFTEL D, WHICH INDICATES WE SHOULD PLAN ON 250 TO 270 AMERICANS AT LUNCH, THE MANSION OFFERS THE MOST VIABLE OPTION. THE STATE DINING ROOM ACCOMMODATES APPROXIMATELY 200. IN ADDITION, THERE IS A DINING FACILITY ACROSS THE STREET IN THE CAPITOL BUILDING THAT WILL ACCOMMODATE ANOTHER 200. AS ANOTHER

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OPTION, THERE IS A SMALL PRIVATE DINING ROOM IN THE EXECUTIVE MANSION WHICH CAN ACCOMMODATE 20, THUS PERMITTING A SMALL ONE-ON-ONE WORKING LUNCH. THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE U.S. OFFICIAL/PRESS PARTY, ALONG WITH SUCH GOL COUNTERPARTS AS DESIRED, COULD BE ACCOMMODATED ELSEWHERE IN THE MANSION AND IN CAPITOL BUILDING.

6. A SCHEDULE INCLUDING LUNCH IN MONROVIA MIGHT GO LIKE THIS:

10:20 A.M. - ARRIVE ROBERTSFIELD

10:20-10:35 A.M. - WELCOMING CEREMONIES

10:40 A.. - DEPART ROBERTSFIELD FOR MONROVIA/EXECUTIVE MANSION

11:20 A.M. -ARRIVE EXECUTIVE MANSION

11:20-12:30 - PRIVATE TALKS BETWEEN TWO PRESIDENTS

12:30-1:45 P.M. - LUNCH

1:45 P.M. - DEPART EXECUTIVE MANSIONFOR ROBERTSFIELD

2:45 P.M. - ARRIVE ROBERTSFIELD

2:45 P.M. - DEPART ROBERTSFIELD AFTER FAREWELL CEREMONIES.

7. SCHEDULE PROPOSED IN PARA 6 ADDS, AT BEST, ONLY ONE
MORE HOUR THAN SUGGESTED IN REFTTEL B, BUT WOULD ACCOMPLISH
MUCH MORE IN POSITIVE IMPACT ON LIBERIA/USG RELATIONS.
CARTER

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